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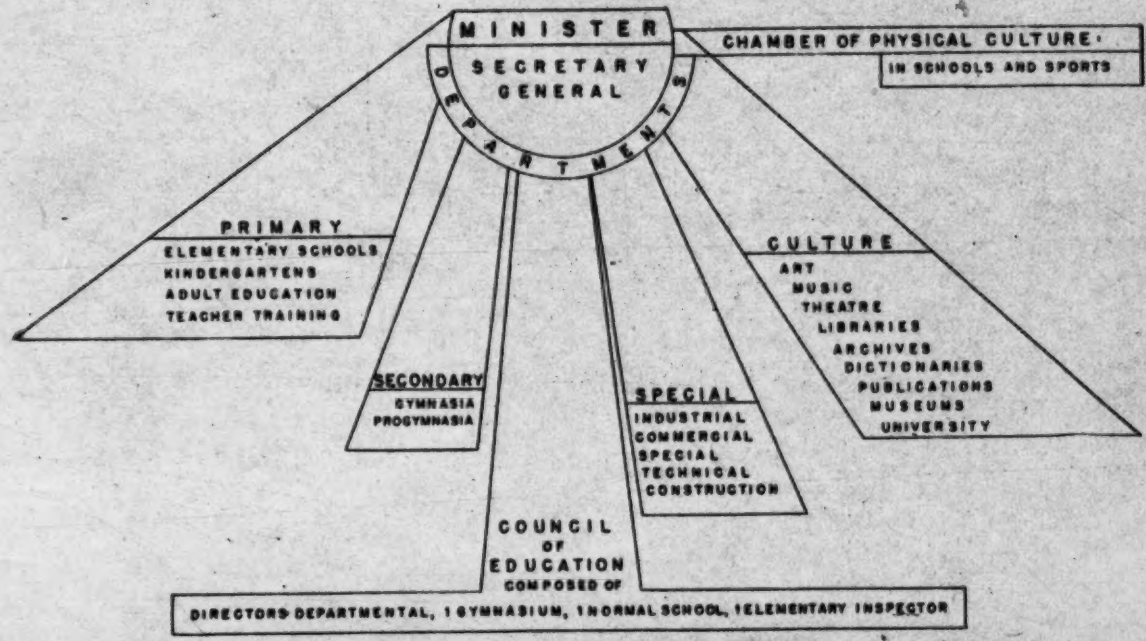
Education in Lithuania

by K. Masiliūnas, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Lithuania



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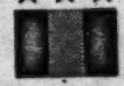
871 ★★★ 

The Lietuvos Taryba, or Lithuanian Council, which acted in 1918 in the name of the Lithuanian people to declare the country's independence, adopt a provisional constitution, and set up a provisional government, found a few schools in active operation but no system of education in the territory that is now Lithuania. Everything had to be built new. An adequate teaching staff had to be trained, the scheme of studies organized, textbooks written and printed, educational appliances provided, and school buildings erected. Little could be done during the first 3 years because the Republic was forced to use all its energies in the defense of its newly regained independence.

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First Law

671 The first law on elementary education was
872 passed in 1922 making the Lithuanian primary
875 school of four grades and requiring all children of both sexes between the ages of 7 and 13 to attend it. The general administrative organization was based on the principle of decentralization which granted wide powers to the local authorities and to the children's parents. However, this experience soon showed that under such a system the qualifications of the
[647] teachers left much to be desired. For this reason the law of 1922 was amended in 1925 and the appointment of teachers, their transfer from one school to another, and certain other matters were centered in the Ministry of Education. In the same year the school curricula were drawn up and officially approved. The schools were run under this law up to 1936 when a new elementary school law
[186] was promulgated which declares that the purpose of the elementary school is to provide primary education for the youth of Lithuania, foster their spiritual and physical growth, and teach them to love, cherish, and sacrifice themselves for Lithuania.

872 The present elementary school has six grades. The first four, obligatory for children between 7 and 13, form the first degree of study. The last two, for children 14 and 15 years old, form the second degree which is optional as yet because not enough schools are available. The increase in them began only in 1933. The elementary school subjects of instruction are: Religion taught by clergymen of the various denominations and compulsory for all children, Lithuanian as the language of instruction, arithmetic, knowledge of environment, history, geography,
872 natural history, art, manual arts, music and
186 singing, and physical training. In an ele-
191 mentary school district where the number of children of non-Lithuanian parentage exceeds

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892 186 191 30, a school with a language of instruction other than Lithuanian may be established. In it Lithuanian is taught as a distinct subject from the second grade onwards, and from the third grade on instruction in environment, history, and geography is given in Lithuanian. In a school with Lithuanian as the medium, children of non-Lithuanian parentage, if their number is not less than 20, are taught their mother tongue as a separate subject.

Certificates Granted

872 874 At the end of the first and second degrees of study, the pupils are examined and granted the elementary school graduation certificate which, if from the second degree, grants the right to enter, without further examination, the first grade of a secondary school (gymnasium) or a school offering special training for a vocation. Persons who have attended no schools may earn these certificates by passing official examinations embracing the entire course of study.

875 Elementary school teachers are classified as junior, first-degree, second-degree, senior first-degree, and senior second-degree. They are trained in normal schools and pedagogical institutes. Admission to normal schools is accorded those who have completed four grades of a secondary school, and the course extends for 4 years. To the pedagogical institutes only graduates of normal schools or gymnasia are admitted and the duration of studies is 2 years. Each teacher has in charge from 30 to 60 pupils, the average being 55. The average number with which the teacher works in winter is 43, and in summer 30,

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875 [872] since not all children in Lithuania attend school all the year. First-grade and second-grade pupils in the rural districts go to school only 4 months; September 1 to November 1, and May 1 to July 1. In winter the country schools are attended only by third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade pupils. In urban areas pupils attend throughout the school year.

871 The maintenance of elementary schools devolves on the local authorities. The costs of one school and one grade are around 11,890.-23 and 5,519.6 litas respectively. One lita is 16.93 cents in coinage of the United States. According to the figures of 1937, the cost of keeping one child in an elementary school is 99.4 litas annually. Towards the upkeep of elementary schools an average of 11.48 litas was paid by every inhabitant in 1937.

School Buildings

346 871 The school buildings are for the most part erected by the localities, grants-in-aid being made by the Ministry of Education which assigns in its budget over a million litas yearly for this purpose. At present about 80 new school buildings are constructed each year at an expenditure of two million litas. With the additional sums assigned for the acquisition of equipment and educational appliances, about three millions are spent annually.

871 On January 31, 1938, there was a total of 2,599 schools, 5,613 teachers, and 301,188 pupils or approximately 12 percent of the entire population enrolled in elementary schools.

871 873 The secondary school system was reorganized in 1936 by a special law. The 8-year gymnasia, modeled after the former Russian

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871 types, were replaced by 7-year gymnasia to
873 the first year of which pupils who have finished a 6-year elementary school are automatically admitted. Thus final graduation from the secondary school now takes place after a course of study of 13 years, 6 in the elementary school and 7 in the secondary. The first three grades of the gymnasium may be founded independently and such a school
[186] is called a progymnasium. In these schools instruction in the Lithuanian language and literature, and in physical science has been especially strengthened, and French introduced as the first foreign language. The curriculum as it is now arranged for the gymnasia is as follows:

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Subjects of instruction	Hours a week by grades—							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	Total
Religion	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
Lithuanian language and general literature	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	30
French	6	6	4	3	3	3	3	28
Second foreign language (German, English, or Russian)	---	---	---	5	5	5	3	18
Latin	---	---	4	4	4	3	3	18
History	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	17
Citizenship	---	---	---	---	---	---	2	2
Elements of philosophy	---	---	---	---	---	2	2	4
Geography	---	2	2	2	2	2	---	10
Mathematics	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	23
Natural sciences	4	3	2	3	3	3	4	22
Drawing	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	14
Physical culture and premilitary training for boys	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	28
Physical culture for girls	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	18
Manual training and housekeeping for girls	1	2	2	2	2	3	---	12
Music and singing	2	2	2	2	2	---	---	10
Total for girls	32	32	32	36	36	37	35	240
Total for boys	32	31	31	36	36	36	36	238

All the subjects listed are compulsory. Pupils who do not do well in any of them are not granted the secondary school leaving certificate. In the schools of national minorities in which the language of instruction is not Lithuanian, the program is quite different.

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[563] 871 873 Instead of the second foreign language, the language of instruction and general literature are taught. There are only 23 weekly lessons in French, 12 in drawing, 25 in physical culture and pre-military training, and 9 in manual training and housekeeping for girls.

Schools Public or Private

871 658 Nineteen thousand nine hundred and thirty-nine secondary school students were attending 66 gymnasia and 34 progymnasia in 1937; in 1919 there were 5 gymnasia and 33 progymnasia with 9,213 students. These schools may be either State (public) or private. The former are founded and maintained by the State; the latter, with the permission of the Minister of Education, by corporations, ecclesiastical orders, and private individuals. All the private schools are under the control of the Ministry of Education which grants subventions toward their maintenance, sends official delegates to inspect the work carried on in them, and appoints their teachers. The students in some of the private gymnasia enjoy all the privileges extended to students in the State schools. In others they do not, and in order to acquire those rights the students must at the end of their course of study, pass examinations in the State schools or in their own schools in the presence of a delegate of the Ministry of Education. The relative numerical status of the two types of schools is:

Type	Progymnasia	Gymnasia
State	22	33
Private:		
Lithuanian	2	10
Jewish	5	14
German	4	5
Latvian	1	----
Polish	----	3
Russian	----	1

562 873 Nine gymnasia and one progymnasium have been especially set aside for the education of girls, and eight for the education of boys. All

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562 873 the others are mixed but in the larger schools in which parallel classes exist, separate classes for boys and girls are established.

875 [658] The extension of the network of secondary schools produced in the first years of Lithuania's independence a shortage of teachers, and educating a staff was undertaken by the State. Teachers were trained in foreign universities, and from 1922 onwards in the University of Vytautas the Great in Kaunas, as well. Most of the 1,432 teachers now employed are university graduates and possess the qualifications required by the Ministry of Education. They are classified as junior teachers, teachers, and senior teachers. The rank of junior teacher is granted to persons who have taken a university course in psychology, pedagogics, the history of pedagogics, pedology, and the methodology of their specialties, or have passed examinations in these subjects and have completed their studies in the subjects necessary for the teaching of their specialty. Junior teachers who have taught successfully not less than 2 years and have conducted two probational lessons in their specialty may be elevated by the Ministry of Education to the rank of teachers. Teachers who have taught with outstanding success for at least 5 years may be raised to senior teachers.

School Competitions

873 555 A State physical culture badge to encourage physical fitness, scout troops and circles, camps for students, and travel during the vacation period are all connected with secondary education, but perhaps the most noteworthy activity to promote all-sided scholastic progress and interscholastic cooperation is the school competitions that were organized first in 1935 and take place at the end of the school year.

In these competitions the secondary schools strive for supremacy in the reading and recitation of Lithuanian, French, and German, drawing, singing, and physical culture. In

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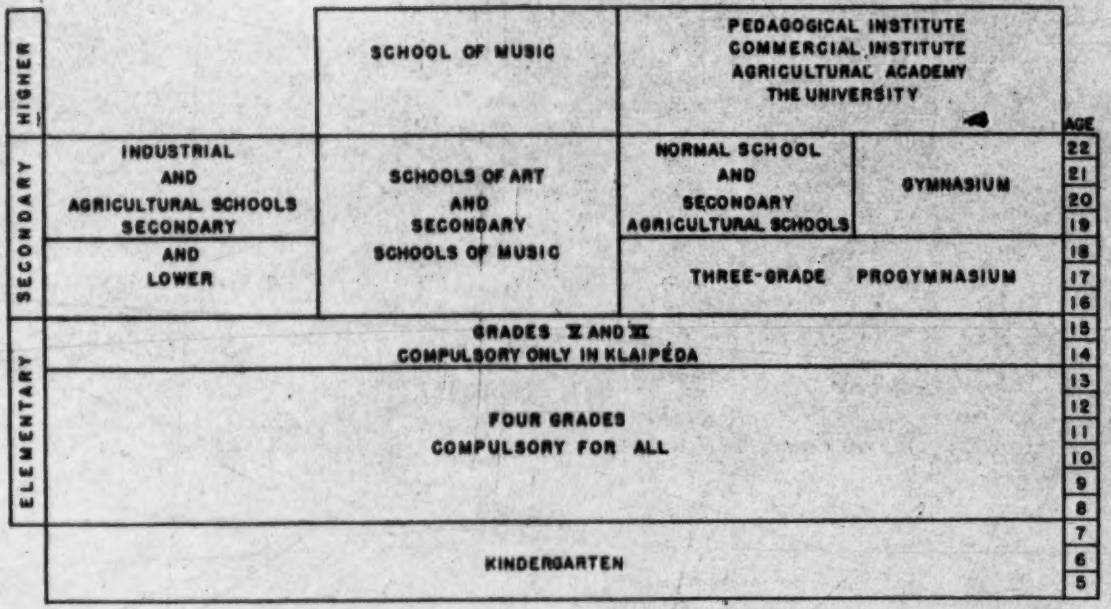

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873 555 each school near the close of the year, the pupils who have shown the most ability are selected from each class. The pick of these are chosen, in the course of a public performance, to represent the gymnasium in the district contest. The picked teams, usually numbering 1,000 to 1,500 students, meet on an appointed day to compete for first place in the district. From them the best readers, reciters, draughtsmen, choirs, sportsmen, etc., are selected to participate in the finals which take place most often at Kaunas. There the teams from the seven districts into which Lithuania is divided for this purpose, compete for the National first, second, and third places. On this occasion festivities on a larger scale are organized and the winners are awarded special prizes. The competitions have been found to promote a will to work among the students, and give them an opportunity to acquire a better knowledge of their country and to make useful personal contacts with their fellow students.

873 The institutions of higher education are the University of Vytautas the Great, the Veterinary Academy, State Conservatory of Music, and State Art School, all at Kaunas; Agricultural Academy at Dotnuva; and the Private Commercial Institute, Pedagogical Institute, and Music School, all at Klaipeda. They enroll approximately 4,400 students. The university began in 1579 as the High School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was later converted into a university, and was closed by the Russians in 1832. As early as December 5, 1918, the Lithuanian State Council passed statutes for this University of Vilnius and it was on the point of reopening in 1919, but military operations intervened and it was not definitely founded until February 16, 1922, at Kaunas. In 1930, when the five hundredth anniversary of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Vytautas the Great, who ruled over a Lithuania that extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, was celebrated with great pomp, the university was renamed in his honor. It is an autonomous institution the powers of which are fixed by the statutes. It is maintained by the state and is connected with the Ministry of Education. During the 16 years of its recent existence, the university has developed into an important educational center which devotes special attention to the study of the Lithuanian language and history.

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Technical Instruction

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658 Up to the Great War there were no technical schools in Lithuania, and technical instruction was received in the course of apprenticeship. The work of reconstruction after the recovery of independence created a great demand for skilled labor and special arrangements had to be made for systematic vocational training. For this purpose the state began to found technical schools but progress was slow until 1926 when a Department of Technical Education was organized in the Ministry of Education and the network of technical schools began to be systematically developed.

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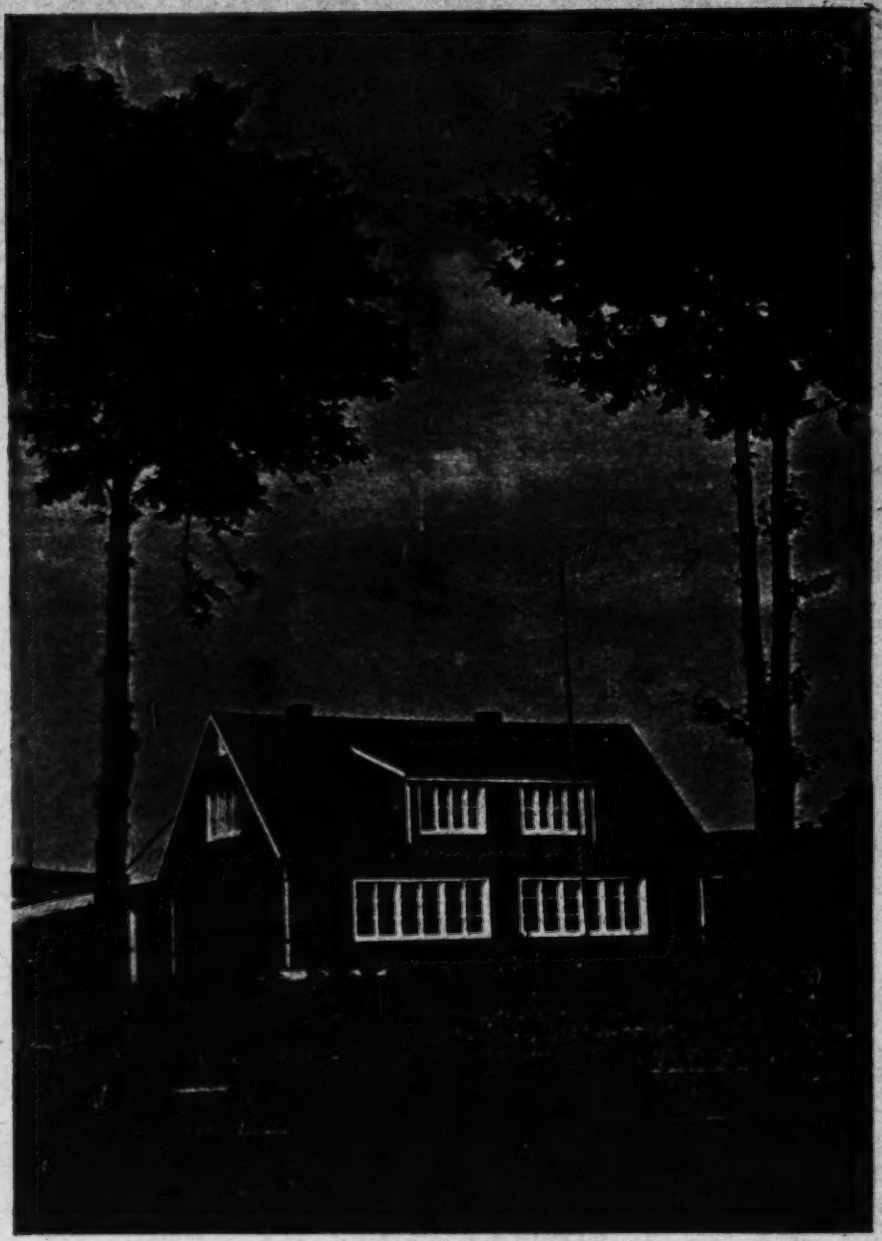

Typical country school.

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874 of technical schools began to be systematically developed. Since there was no place in the country where teachers could be trained for handicraft instruction, the state granted a number of scholarships to young people for the study of technical instruction in foreign countries.

The Handicraft Law published in 1929 and the Rules in 1932 definitely established that the technical schools were to be of two types: Secondary and lower with a study period of 4 years in each. At first they did not find any

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874 great public favor and often there was a lack of pupils but that initial difficulty has been surmounted and candidates are now plentiful. The schools now have on their registers about 3,000 students of which 24.1 percent are in housekeeping schools for girls and 8.2 percent in commercial schools.

Agricultural schools, all under the Ministry of Agriculture, are intermediate and lower. The four intermediate schools (dairy, cattle-breeding, land-betterment, and forestry) now

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874 in operation admit candidates who possess certificates that they have finished four or six grades of a gymnasium, or a lower agricultural school, and give them from 2 to 3 years of training. The purpose of the lower agricultural schools is to raise the standard of the practical training of farmers and farm-wives. Graduates of elementary schools are automatically admitted for a study period of 2 years. The nine State and eight private schools of this class have an attendance of 1,504 and employ 137 teachers.

871 The government of Lithuania assigns considerable sums for educational purposes. For instance, in 1938 the budget of the Ministry of Education carried the figure of 56,656,891 litas (44,580,045 ordinary, and 12,076,846 extraordinary expenditures), or 16.34 percent of the total National budget.

532 **The Lithuanian sculptor, Petras Rimša, portrays the "Lietuvos Mokykla" (The Lithuanian School).**